
Leading Indirectly – Case Studies

1. Newcomer Becomes Cadet Commander.

“Liz” is a 17-year old C/1st Lt who moved to your town two months ago. She’s bright, mature, and a graduate of Cadet Officer School. Your current cadet commander is about to leave for college, and after careful consideration, you think that Liz is the best cadet to take over. She’ll probably serve in the top slot for a year before moving on to college herself. However, the current cadet deputy commander, Alex, a 15-year old C/2nd Lt, is very ambitious. Before Liz suddenly arrived, Alex had assumed he would move up to the top position. No doubt, Alex will be crushed by your decision, and may even resent Liz, a newcomer who barely out-ranks him.

► *What guidance do you give Liz when you offer her the position of cadet commander?*

2. New Cadet Officer Leads Bivouac

“Nate,” a new cadet officer, is a ground team expert. Now that he has earned his Mitchell, you decide to let Nate lead a bivouac / field training exercise. You had him brief you on his plans, and were impressed by his attention to detail. He had your confidence. But now, it’s just after dinner on the first of three days in the field. So far, you’re disappointed in Nate’s leadership. You observed that when the junior cadets arrived at the bivouac, Nate and his staff stood around the fire socializing, instead of helping the airmen make camp. In teaching the cadets how to tie basic knots, Nate is cocky. The NCOs on his staff are becoming cocky, too. You overhear the cadet staff talking about how they should be authorized “boonie” hats as a perk for being on staff.

► *How do you approach Nate about his conduct as a leader?*

3. Lackluster Cadet Aims for Academy

“Aaron” is a cadet in your squadron. He is 16 years old, and has earned two stripes in as many years, despite your making some attempts to encourage him to progress. From reading the local newspaper, you know that Aaron is on the honor roll every term. Although he attends nearly every squadron activity, his hair is always too long, his uniform never pressed, and he does not seem to have any close friends. As you see him slouching in formation, you wonder why he even bothers to participate – his heart doesn’t seem to be in it. Even more puzzling, his family and his fellow cadets say that he absolutely wants to attend the USAF Academy and fly fighters – apparently, he mentions it all the time.

► *What will you do to help Aaron achieve that goal?*

4. Outstanding Cadet is Never Satisfied

“Ryan” is the top cadet in your wing. He’s a 17-year old C/Lt Col, cadet commander, CAC chair. He’s popular and respected. Nevertheless, Ryan is very critical of himself. He’s the fastest runner on the drill team, but can never run fast enough to his liking. He earns A-minuses in school, and that frustrates him, too. Trying to win the speech competition, he practiced for hours and hours. But, on the day of the competition, his speech ran 8 seconds over the time limit, so he stormed out of the

room, where he spent 30-minutes sulking in the stairwell, telling all who tried to counsel him, “Leave me alone, please.” Because Ryan has served as the cadet commander for over a year, you know that it would be best for the unit to move him to a different job and give his deputy, a very good cadet officer, a shot at the top job.

► *How will you communicate your decision to Ryan?*

5. NCO Tries to Coach Cadets in Drill

“TSgt Flanders” spent twenty years in the Air National Guard. He and his son have joined your CAP squadron. One night, as he watched the cadets practice for an upcoming drill competition, TSgt Flanders ordered the cadet commander to halt the flight, and then proceeded to tell them how they were doing all the movements “wrong.” A non-stop talker, TSgt Flanders’ continued with his impromptu instruction for 20-minutes, eating up the cadets’ practice time. Some say he used profanity a few times, perhaps by accident. A senior member eventually succeeded in “freeing” the cadets to resume their drill, but TSgt Flanders stormed off in a huff and avoided talking with anyone for the rest of the meeting.

► *When you see TSgt Flanders at the next meeting, how, if at all, will you approach him about the incident?*

6. Young Cadet Officer Takes Charge

A ninth-grader, “Philip” is young for his rank, C/Capt, and serves as your squadron’s cadet deputy commander. You’ve slowed-down his promotions a few times for lack of maturity, but reluctantly signed-off on his Earhart. When asked by someone if he has a girlfriend, Philip replied, “No, freshman girls are too spacey for me, they don’t have goals.” One night, when the cadet commander was absent, Philip admonished the cadets for not meeting his standards in their wear of the uniform, and military courtesy. “People! The regulations are clear on these matters! You must comply or else you will not get promoted. For next week, you each will write a 5-page essay on ‘The Importance of Following Regulations.’” These events unfold while the senior staff meets in an adjacent room, where you overhear most of Philip’s speech. You leave to see what is going on. Upon seeing you, Philip states, “Sir, I insist that you back me up on this.”

► *What do you do?*

7. Irate Parent Confronts You in Public

Your work brings you to the public library on a regular basis, a fact well-known to everyone in your squadron. One day, while conducting research there, you see “Heidi” enter, a thrice-divorced parent of one of your cadets. She sees you and immediately marches over to you, not waiting to reach your location before beginning her monologue, in her normal (obnoxiously loud) volume. “I’m calling Wing! You can not not make my son the sergeant marshal of the flight and that Scott is your favorite and he got recruited by my Glenn and it’s not fair that cause Glenn is on Ritalin that he can’t pass tests quicker than Scott can who owes him for bringing him to CAP and that’s not right and I’M CALLING WING!”

► *Your move.*